

## CARMA PRESENTATION ON RONALD REAGAN

By NORB SMITH

QUOTED FROM THE INTRODUCTION IN THE BOOK "THE PEACEMAKER" BY DR. WILLIAM INBODEN, AND PUBLISHED IN 2022.

"ALONG WITH FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT, RONALD REAGAN WAS ONE OF THE TWO MOST CONSEQUENTIAL PRESIDENTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. HE WAS REVILED AND RIDICULED BY MANY EXPERTS AND PUNDITS AT THE TIME, BUT HISTORY'S UNFOLDING NOW OFFERS A NEW WINDOW TO REASSESS HIM, PARTICULARLY HIS FOREIGN POLICY. HIS CRITICS, WHO WERE LEGION, FEARED THAT HIS PRESIDENCY WOULD LEAD TO DISASTROUS OUTCOMES SUCH AS NUCLEAR APOCALYPSE, "ANOTHER VIETNAM", AND AMERICA'S TERMINAL DECLINE. INSTEAD, WITH THE PEACEFUL END OF THE COLD WAR, COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION, RENEWAL OF THE UNITED STATES, AND GLOBAL EXPANSION OF FREEDOM AND PROSPERITY, REAGAN'S GRAND STRATEGY SUCCEEDED BEYOND EVEN HIS IMAGINING.

THESE ACHIEVEMENTS BECOME ALL THE MORE REMARKABLE WHEN CONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE THAT CONFRONTED HIM UPON TAKING OFFICE. WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND THE COMPLACENCY THAT THE COLD WAR'S PEACEFUL RESOLUTION INDUCES, WE RISK FORGETTING THE TERROR AND DRAMA OF THE DAY. COMMUNIST REGIMES CONTROLLED A VAST SWATH OF THE EURASIAN LANDMASS, AND USED ARMED REVOLUTION AND SUBTERFUGE TO MAKE FURTHER ADVANCES IN LATIN AMERICA, AFRICA AND ASIA. THE SOVIET UNION TARGETED UPWARD OF FORTY THOUSAND NUCLEAR WARHEADS AT THE UNITED STATES. MANY EXPERTS BELIEVED THE USSR WAS STRONG AND RESILIENT, MATCHING IF NOT ECLIPSING THE UNITED STATES AS A WORLD POWER, AND WOULD REMAIN AMERICA'S ADVERSARY FOR THE INDEFINITE FUTURE.

THE UNITED STATES, MEANWHILE, APPEARED TO MUCH OF THE WORLD AS A CRIPPLED GIANT, IN INEXORABLE DECLINE FROM ECONOMIC STAGNATION, MILITARY WEAKNESS, POLITICAL DYSFUNCTION, AND INTERNATIONAL INEPTITUDE. AT HOME, A CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE FURTHER ERODED AMERICA'S POLITICAL WILL AND CAPABILITY TO CONFRONT CHALLENGES DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN. MANY AMERICANS, AND MORE THAN A FEW ALLIED LEADERS, WORRIED THAT THE PRESIDENCY ITSELF WAS BROKEN. POLITICAL DIVISION, INSOLUBLE POLICY CHALLENGES, AND THE BURDENS OF THE OFFICE SEEMED TO RENDER IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANY PRESIDENT TO SUCCEED. NOT SINCE EISENHOWER TWO DECADES EARLIER HAD A U.S. PRESIDENT COMPLETED TWO FULL TERMS IN OFFICE. OF THE FIVE SINCE, AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET HAD FELLED JOHN KENNEDY; VIETNAM HAD CRIPPLED LYNDON JOHNSON AND FORCED HIM TO ESCHEW REELECTION; WATERGATE HAD DRIVEN RICHARD NIXON TO RESIGN AHEAD OF CERTAIN IMPEACHMENT; HIS UNELECTED SUCCESSOR, GERALD FORD, HAD LOST TO JIMMY CARTER; CARTER HAD JUST BEEN DEFEATED BY REAGAN. RESTORING AMERICA'S STANDING COULD NOT HAPPEN WITHOUT RESTORING THE OFFICE OF ITS CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

AS A CANDIDATE, REAGAN BELIEVED THESE TRENDS COULD BE REVERSED. AS PRESIDENT, HE SET OUT TO DO SO. HE LED THE AMERICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY, HELPING SPARK A GLOBAL BOOM. HE REBUILT THE AMERICAN MILITARY AND USED IT TO HELP REPAIR ALLIANCES AND BRING THE SOVIET UNION TO HEEL. HE REVIVED HIS NATION'S BELIEF IN ITSELF, ITS VALUES, AND ITS ROLE IN THE WORLD. HE RECAPTURED THE STRENGTH, DYNAMISM, AND GRANDEUR OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT. ACROSS THE GLOBE, REAGAN RECOGNIZED THE EMERGING INFORMATION AGE AND DEMOCRATIC WAVE, AND POSITIONED HIS COUNTRY TO HELP STEER AND SHAPE BOTH. IN THE COLD WAR, HE PERCEIVED THE SOVIET UNION'S FRAILTY AND ILLEGITMACY, AND DEVELOPED A STRATEGY TO EXPLOIT ITS

WEAKNESSES, WHILE ALSO PARTNERING WITH IT TO REDUCE THE RISK OF NUCLEAR APOCALYPSE.

REAGAN TRIED TO DO ALL THIS WHILE PREVENTING THE OUTBREAK OF WAR AND RIDDING THE WORLD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. HOW TO RESOLVE THESE SEEMINGLY INCOMPATIBLE GOALS? HOW COULD HE TRY TO DEFEAT SOVIET COMMUNISM WHILE AT THE SAME TIME COOPERATING WITH THE KREMLIN TO END THE ARMS RACE? REAGAN DID THIS BY PURSUING THE SOVIET UNION'S *NEGOTIATED SURRENDER*. "NEGOTIATED" BECAUSE HE FAVORED DIPLOMACY OVER WAR, AND WANTED TO PARTNER WITH A SOVIET LEADER TO NEGOTIATE ARMS REDUCTIONS AND REDUCED TENSIONS, LEADING ULTIMATELY TO ELIMINATING NUCLEAR WEAPONS. "SURRENDER" BECAUSE HE LOATHED SOVIET COMMUNISM AS A REPREHENSIBLE SYSTEM, A PLAGUE ON ALL WHOM IT RULED, AND HE SOUGHT TO RENDER IT EXTINCT. IN MANY WAYS THESE GOALS WERE IN TENSION, EVEN AT TIMES CONTRADICTION. YET WHILE REAGAN SOMETIMES EMPHASIZED ONE AND AT OTHER TIMES THE OTHER, HE HELD TENACIOUSLY TO BOTH.

HE BUILT HIS COLD WAR STRATEGY ON EIGHT PILLARS. FIRST, RESTORING THE AMERICAN ECONOMY AS A FOUNDATION OF NATIONAL STRENGTH AND MORALE. SECOND, DELIGITIMIZING SOVIET COMMUNISM AS A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. THIRD, BUILDING UP AND MODERNIZING AMERICA'S MILITARY. FOURTH, SUPPORTING ANTICOMMUNIST INSURGENCIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. FIFTH, MAKING "MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION (MAD) OBSOLETE THROUGH THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE. SIXTH, PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD, ESPECIALLY IN THE SOVIET BLOC. SEVENTH, PRESSURING THE SOVIET SYSTEM INTO PRODUCING A REFORMIST LEADER WITH WHOM REAGAN COULD NEGOTIATE. EIGHTH, REDUCING THE NUMBER OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

IN THE WORLD – WITH THE ULTIMATE HOPE OF ABOLISHING NUCLEAR WEAPONS ENTIRELY.

ABOVE ALL, REAGAN SOUGHT TO TURN SOVIET STRENGTHS INTO LIABILITIES. HE BELIEVED THAT THE MASSIVE RED ARMY, WARSAW PACT VASSALS, SOVIET SUPPORT FOR THIRD WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS, AND THE KREMLIN'S CONTROL OF ITS OWN PEOPLE DISPLAYED THE SOVIET SYSTEM'S WEAKNESS, RATHER THAN ITS POWER. HE SOUGHT TO BREAK THIS SYSTEM APART BY FINDING FISSURES AND DRIVING WEDGES INTO EVERY CRACK. HE PURSUED POLICIES TO FREE THE WARSAW PACT SATELLITE NATIONS FROM MOSCOW'S CONTROL, TO LIBERATE THE SOVIET PEOPLE FROM THE POLICE STATE, TO ISOLATE THE KREMLIN FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD, AND TO IMPOSE SUCH UNSUSTAINABLE COSTS ON SOVIET COMMUNISM THAT IT WOULD COLLAPSE.

IN SUM, REAGAN PURSUED A COMPREHENSIVE COLD WAR STRATEGY THAT SOUGHT TO REBUILD AMERICA'S STRENGTHS AND POSE THEM AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION ACROSS VIRTUALLY EVERY DIMENSION. AN ALLIANCE SYSTEM BUILT ON CHOICE VERSUS THE COERCED COLONIES OF THE WARSAW PACT. WEAPONS SYSTEMS THAT OUTMATCHED THEIR COUNTERPARTS. AN OPEN SOCIETY AGAINST A CLOSED ONE. SELF-GOVERNMENT VERSUS DICTATORSHIP. RELIGIOUS FAITH AGAINST ATHEISM. PROSPERITY VERSUS PENURY. FREEDOM OVER TYRANNY."